

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 SP-02
/057 W

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R 090824Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5952
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 3822/01

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, JA
SUBJECT: SOHYO INVITES AFL-CIO TO ITS CONVENTION

1. SUMMARY. SOHYO HAS PBULICLY INVITED AFL-CIO
TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO ITS ANNUAL CONVENTION THIS
YEAR AND FOR FIRST TIME HAS DECIDED NOT TO INVITE
LABOR REPRESENTATIVES OF USSR OR OTHER COMMUNIST NATIONS.
SOHYO'S DECISION TO ISSUE INVITATION ON AFL-CIO TERMS
HAS HAD DRAMATIC EFFECT IN JAPANESE LABOR CIRCLES EQUAL
TO IMPACT MADE BY SOHYO MAKIEDA'S SURPRISE VISIT TO
WASHINGTON IN SUMMER OF 1976. WHILE VISITING AFL-CIO
DELEGATION SEEMS IMPRESSED BY SOHYO PRESIDENT MAKIEDA'S
SINCERITY IN MAKING INVITATION AND COURAGE IN REVERSING
SOHYO'S LONG-STANDING POLICY, IT NOT AT ALL
CERTAIN WHETHER AFL-CIO WILL ACCEPT. MAJOR FACTOR
WILL PROBABLY BE DOMEI'S ATTITUDE. NEVERTHELESS,
INVITATION ITSELF REPRESENTS ONE FURTHER INDICATION
OF CURRENT SOHYO LEADERSHIP'S EFFORTS TO MOVE ORGANIZATION
CLOSER TO MODERATE UNIONS IN WEST AND AWAY FROM
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COMMUNIST CAMP. END SUMMARY.

2. AT CHARGE'S LUNCH MARCH 8 FOR VISITING AFL-CIO
DELEGATION (VICE PRESIDENTS WARD AND TURNER AND INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS DIRECTOR LEE), SOHYO PRESIDENT MAKIEDA UNEXPECTEDLY
TOOK FLOOR TO ANNOUNCE THAT, IN VIEW OF COMMON CRITICAL
EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS BEING FACED BY UNIONS IN COUNTRIES

WITH CAPITALIST ECONOMIES, SOHYO BELIEVED IT WAS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO STRENGTHEN TIES WITH SUCH UNIONS. HE SAID THAT SOHYO THEREFORE PLANNED TO INVITE AFL-CIO, BRITISH TUC AND WEST GERMAN DGB AMONG OTHERS, TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO SOHYO CONVENTION THIS SUMMER. MAKIEDA ADDED THAT SINCE PRESENCE AT SAME CONVENTION OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM UNIONS IN "SOCIALIST COUNTRIES" (E.G. USSR AND EASTERN EUROPEANS) WOULD GIVE RISE TO FURTHER "MISUNDERSTANDING" IN US AND ELSEWHERE OF SOHYO'S MOTIVES, SOHYO FOR FIRST TIME WOULD REFRAIN FROM INVITING THEM TO ATTEND THIS YEAR.

3. IN PRESENCE OF PRESIDENT OF DOMEI AND CHURITSU ROREN, OTHER TWO MAJOR JAPANESE LABOR CONFEDERATIONS, MAKIEDA, WHILE ADMITTING THAT DIFFERENCES EXISTED AMONG THESE CONFEDERATIONS STILL RULED OUT POSSIBILITY OF FORMAL REUNIFICATION OF JAPANESE LABOR MOVEMENT, THEN MADE STRONG APPEAL TO INCREASE THEIR COOPERATIVE EFFORTS ON SUCH PRACTICAL ECONOMIC ISSUES AS TRADE AND UNEMPLOYMENT.

4. SOHYO SECGEN TOMIZUKA LATER TOLD PRESS THAT HE WOULD VISIT WESTERN EUROPE AND US IN MAY (PRESUMABLY ON HIS WAY TO ATTEND UN SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT AS NGO OBSERVER) TO CONVEY FORMAL INVITATION TO BRITISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, ITALIAN AND US LABOR FEDERATIONS.

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5. COMMENT: EVER SINCE MAKIEDA MADE SURPRISE VISIT OF RECONCILIATION TO AFL-CIO HEADQUARTERS JUST AFTER TAKING OFFICE IN AUGUST 1976, SOHYO HAS BEEN TOYING WITH IDEA OF INVITING AFL-CIO TO ITS CONVENTION. IT BELIEVES THAT AFL-CIO PRESENCE AT ITS CONVENTION WOULD DEMONSTRATE PUBLICLY THAT 15-YEAR OLD FEUD BETWEEN THEM HAS BEEN ENDED. MAIN STUMBLING BLOCK UNTIL NOW HAS BEEN UNEQUIVOCAL REFUSAL ON PART OF AFL-CIO TO ATTEND ANY LABOR CONVENTION AT WHICH UNION REPRESENTATIVES FROM COMMUNIST COUNTRIES ALSO WOULD BE PRESENT. THIS REFUSAL REPEATED TO MAKIEDA BY AFL-CIO REPRESENTATIVES IN PRIVATE MEETING WITH HIM JUST LAST MONDAY. THEREFORE, MAKIEDA'S DECISION TO GO PUBLIC WITH INVITATION ON AFL-CIO TERMS HAS HAD DRAMATIC EFFECT IN JAPANESE LABOR CIRCLES WHICH IS AT LAST EQUAL TO BOMBSHELL IMPACT OF HIS WASHINGTON VISIT. FOR EXAMPLE, MINISTRY OF LABOR DEPUTY VICE MINISTER IWATA TOLD US WILLINGNESS OF SOHYO PRESIDENT TO SIT DOWN AT SAME TABLE AT AMERICAN EMBASSY WITH DOMEI AND AFL-CIO REPRESENTATIVES WAS SIGN THAT SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN SOHYO'S ATTITUDE WAS IN THE WIND AND HE LABELED MAKIEDA'S STATEMENT "EPOCH MAKING." AFL-CIO VICE PRESIDENT WARD TOLD LABATT THAT HE CONSIDERED MAKIEDA'S PUBLIC OFFER OF INVITATION

A SINCERE AND COURAGEOUS EFFORT TO MEET AFL-CIO CONCERNS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 TOKYO 3822/02

6. IT IS OF COURSE NOT YET CERTAIN WHETHER AFL-CIO WILL RESPOND FAVORABLY TO SOHYO INVITATION. COMPLICATIONS MAY DEVELOP DURING AFL-CIO DELEGATION'S FORMAL TALKS WITH TOMIZUKA TOMORROW. FURTHER HANGUP MAY EMERGE WITH RESPECT TO SOHYO'S PROBABLE INVITATION TO COMMUNIST-DOMINATED FEDERATIONS IN FRANCE AND ITALY. MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION, HOWEVER, WILL BE DOMEI'S ATTITUDE. AFL-CIO HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT WILL NOT PATCH UP ITS DIFFERENCES WITH SOHYO AT DOMEI'S EXPENSE. AT THIS POINT, IT APPEARS SPIRITED DEBATE WILL TAKE PLACE WITHIN DOMEI ABOUT WHAT ADVICE TO GIVE AFL-CIO, WITH DOMEI PRESIDENT AMAIKE PROBABLY LEANING TOWARDS A POSITIVE RESPONSE AND VICE PRESIDENT SHIOJI, WHOSE PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH SOHYO'S LEADERS ARE PRETTY BAD, ARGUING THAT INVITATION IS SIMPLY PR GESTURE AND THAT SOHYO'S BASIC ATTITUDES REMAIN THE SAME.

7. IN ANY CASE, IF AFL-CIO AND SOHYO REALLY PATCH UP THEIR LONG-STANDING DIFFERENCES, WE WOULD WITNESS BEGINNING OF NEW ERA IN RELATIONS BETWEEN JAPANESE AND
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AMERICAN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS. MOREOVER, IF SOHYO BEGINS TO DEVOTE ITS MAIN ATTENTION TO TIES WITH WESTERN UNIONS RATHER THAN TO SOVIETS, CHINESE AND THEIR FRIENDS, ITS CHANGE IN ATTITUDE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE REFLECTED WITHIN JAPAN SOCIALIST PARTY (JSP), WHICH LOOKS TO SOHYO AS MAIN SOURCE OF POLITICAL FUNDS AND CAMPAIGN WORKERS. MODERATES IN JSP HAVE LONG AND UNSUCCESSFULLY URGED PARTY TO LOOK WEST RATHER THAN EAST IN ITS INTERNATIONAL TIES AND TO CULTIVATE MODERATE OPPOSITION PARTIES RATHER THAN COMMUNIST PARTY DOMESTICALLY. IF SOHYO SHIFTS, JSP IS NOT LIKELY TO BE FAR BEHIND.
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